



City of Seattle

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Seattle Transportation
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December 14, 2004

*Seattle
Pedestrian
Advisory
Board*

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The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City on matters related to pedestrians and the impacts which actions by the City may have upon the pedestrian environment; and shall have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the City's planning processes insofar as they may relate to pedestrian safety and access.

City Council Resolution
28791

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Dear Barbara:

Here are the Pedestrian Advisory Board's comments on the October 12 Staff Draft of the Transportation Strategic Plan.

T1.2 (Only Consider Rapid Transit Investments...): The title here is still totally unclear. Reword it as "Rapid transit investments should only occur within the UVTN"?

Furthermore, it's unnecessary to restrict a grade-separated high capacity transit line to conforming to the street system. Transit lines should go where they need to in order to place stations in places pedestrians want to be.

W1 (Make Street Crossings Safer and Easier): SPAB is concerned that this section largely refers to responding to citizen complaints and requests. While we're delighted when SDOT fixes a bad crossing due to citizen input, this is not an effective way to coordinate pedestrian improvements over the long term. See our later item (W16) calling for a Pedestrian Master Plan that will be data-driven rather than complaint-driven.

W1.4 (Improve Pedestrian Access to Monorail and Sound Transit Rail Systems):
Add to the end:

"Access issues vary based on whether the station is at-, below-, or above-grade. Fundamentally, when a pedestrian needs to cross a street to reach a station, the at-grade crossing can not be overlooked and remains important even if other methods are considered as the primary mode of access. If the station is below- or above-grade or if a significant grade change occurs near the station, grade-



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separated access should be included to both sides of the street when possible, in addition to the street level crossing. As with other overpasses discussed in W1.5, peak pedestrian volumes may warrant inclusion of multiple grade-separated methods supplementing at-grade station area crossings in extreme circumstances. Because at-grade crossings will continue to be used, overpasses must not replace safety improvements to crossings that are considered unsafe.”

W1.5 (Consider Overpasses Over Major Pedestrian Barriers): We basically agree with this section (which is good, since we wrote half of it), but would like to clarify the criteria the city should use when evaluating whether to build an overpass.

“Identify locations where barriers such as highways, rail lines, or interstates block pedestrian access by operating grade-separated or in a limited-access right of way, warranting pedestrian overpasses. Recent examples of locations where pedestrian overpasses are under planning or have been built include the Weller Street Overpass over rail tracks at King Street Station; Ray Moore Bridge over SR 99 at Galer Street; and Thomas Street Overpass over the BNSF railroad tracks from Elliott Avenue to Myrtle Edwards Park. Overpasses should be ADA compliant, exhibit high-quality design and be used to knit together a fragmented street network, not specifically to improve vehicular traffic flow. They should not be used to replace necessary safety improvements to at-grade crossings. In cases where pedestrians already need to go up or down a grade, such as moving down a hillside, grade-separated crossings could be used to supplement at-grade crossings in areas with extreme pedestrian volumes.”

W5 (Complete and Maintain Sidewalk Network): Another goal that should appear in this section is amending the land use code to require that all new development and major renovation invokes the requirement to build sidewalks. This effort should be coordinated with DPD.

The list of priorities for building sidewalks (“school walking routes, access to transit, to public facilities, social services,” etc.) essentially covers every street in the city. While every street should have sidewalks, this list doesn't help prioritize where they should be built. The most pressing need is for sidewalks in Urban Villages that don't have a complete sidewalk network; other priorities could be set with the help of figure 9 (showing sidewalk network coverage; the figure is mislabeled). See also our comments on OM2.

W6 (Provide for Pedestrian/Elderly/Disabled Accessibility): Let's start with the title. It might be more clear to call this section “Make Crossings Accessible to All Pedestrians Regardless of Disability Status.” Our board member Jean Healy, who is deaf and legally blind, commented after reading this item that it sounds like the city plans to maintain two networks of street crossings: those accessible to pedestrians without disabilities, and a smaller subset accessible to pedestrians with disabilities. In the short term, as the city is just starting to install APS signals and other accessibility treatments, this is the best we can do. But the TSP, as Seattle's 20-year transportation plan, can do a lot better. The goal should be accessibility at *every* intersection. This is consistent with the recommendations of ADA. Finally, “neighborhood acceptance” is not a useful criterion for determining where pedestrians with disabilities will be able to travel comfortably.

W8 (Develop Pedestrian Transportation Performance Measures): It should be clarified that these performance measures will be used to support policies such as W1, W5, W6, and the citywide Pedestrian Master Plan we propose below (W16).

W13 (Support Enforcement of Traffic Laws That Protect the Rights of Pedestrians): This item would represent an about-face on current policy. Washington has a model pro-pedestrian traffic law (WAC 132E-16-040: the “every intersection is a crosswalk” code) that is essentially never followed by drivers and never enforced by police except in the event of a collision. The other key law that protects pedestrian rights is the law against running red lights. It is also rarely enforced.

Here's how this item could read.

“Every day in Seattle, pedestrians are endangered by drivers who fail to yield in crosswalks and drivers who run red lights. SDOT will work with SPD to implement an enforcement and education program for WAC 132E-16-040 (Pedestrians -- Right of way) and will investigate installing red light cameras at key intersections.”

The TSP should recognize that traffic calming and enforcement go hand-in-hand. In an environment designed for 25 mph, with narrow streets, curb bulbs, and good surface treatments, drivers generally stop for pedestrians. Our crosswalk law is meaningless as long as the city maintains intersections where it is legal for pedestrians to cross but you'd have to be crazy to try it.

W14 (Support Wayfinding Projects): Wayfinding projects should consider accessibility issues from day one. This item should also reference comp plan item T34 -- our stairways need better signage.

W15 (Accommodate Pedestrians During Construction): This section needs elaboration. Some of the specifics below may need to be saved for the ROWIM, but please feel free to use whatever is appropriate to the TSP. This section would probably set new city policy, since the city currently handles construction closures on an ad hoc basis.

“Ensure that safe and convenient pedestrian access is maintained during construction of transportation facilities and new development, including City of Seattle projects.

“Sidewalks should generally remain open during construction unless sidewalk repair or access to other utilities is necessary, or unless the city grants an exemption to the above. Contractors should maintain pedestrian movement during any necessary sidewalk closure, by building or partitioning off a pedestrian walkway in the adjacent parking or travel lane. Under no circumstances should the sidewalk be closed on both sides of the same block or more than one corner of an intersection be blocked.

“The city should makes special efforts to maintain access in cases where (a) crossing distances are long, or signal timing/placement makes crossing the street especially onerous (for example, multiple-lane arterials), (b) setbacks are present, which should allow work to proceed without necessitating sidewalk closure, or (c) construction projects take up less than the length of a block.

“Identify other priorities for maintaining pedestrian movement during construction, such as urban villages, areas around schools, and transit stops.

“Multiple street crossings due to multiple sidewalk closures not only are an inconvenience to pedestrians, but increase the risk of pedestrian / vehicle conflicts. Work together with the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to insure that the combined impact of multiple projects minimizes disruption to pedestrian movement.”

NEW ITEM: W16. Develop a City-Wide Pedestrian Master Plan

“Develop a comprehensive pedestrian master plan to assess pedestrian needs throughout the entire city. Using the Portland Pedestrian Master Plan as a model, the plan shall integrate all the above strategies as well as existing neighborhood plans and transportation studies completed throughout the city. A Pedestrian Master Plan will take a more comprehensive approach to prioritizing pedestrian investments. The city has limited funds for pedestrian projects; therefore we need to develop an approach for evaluating pedestrian projects on a city-wide level using traffic and accident data, pedestrian performance measures, and citizen input.”

OM2 (Develop and Maintain Roadway Conditions Database): The Roadway Conditions Database should also include information on sidewalk conditions. Such a database could, for example, anticipate sidewalk damage due to street trees before it becomes a hazard. Many property owners are unaware that they are responsible for sidewalk maintenance. A regular reminder could go out with City Light or SPU bills.

Thanks again for the opportunity to help guide the evolution of this document, and we look forward to reading the final draft.

Sincerely,

Matthew Amster-Burton
Chair
Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

Jodie Vice
Vice Chair
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